SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: From our side we wanted Mata Hniglaj Devi, but from their side they have not asked for any. And, as I have mentioned, even to the six which are opened to them, from 1992 no pilgrims have come.

श्री कृष्ण लाल शर्मा : सभापति महोदय, आपने संख्या के बारे में बताया। मैं सिर्फ यह जानना चाहता हूं कि वीसा की प्रोब्लम तो अलग हैं, वह समझ सकते हें, लेकिन भारत और पाकिस्तान के संबंध में जो कभी बिगड़ते है या अच्छे होते हें तो उसका कोई प्रभाव इस पर है या नहीं?

SRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, it would be difficult to say whether it is because of the deteriorating situation or whether it is being done deliberately to avoid. That is some sort of a subjective judgement. But, from the Pakistan side, since 1992 nobody has come. From our side, .both Hindus and Sikhs arc going and the numbers are, more or less, static.

श्री अनन्तराय जायसवाल : मान्यवर, मंत्री जी ने अपने जवाब में बतलाया कि सन् 1974 में यह समझौता हुआ था। तब वे अब तक प्रश्नगत मन्दिर की यात्रा के लिए भारतीयों की तरफ से मितनी बार प्रार्थना की गयी अअतः आपने इस सिलसिले में क्या कार्यवाही की हैं?

Am I clear, Sir?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, they have not agreed to open it. I have mentioned it.

SHRI BALBIR SINGH: I want to know from your goodsclf whether the protocol agreement of 1974 includes maintenance of shrines because most of the Sikh shrines in Pakistan are in a very dilapidated condition.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, the responsibility of maintaining the shrines lies with the various management committees which are in charge of the shrines, and the local Government are expected to provide the necessary logistic support as and when it is demanded. Therefore, through protocol, we cannot enforce anything about their maintenance.

"142. *[The Questioner (Shri S. Austin) was absent. For answer vide Col. 32 infra I*

Census of Indian citizens residing abroad

*143. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Indian citizens residing in the countries where we have diplomatic representation;

(b) whether a census of such expatriate citizens is arranged on a regular basis; and

(c) whether arrangements are on the anvil for ensuring that Indians living abroad are enabled to cast their votes during Parliamentary elections?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The total number of overseas Indians which includes Indian citizens settle abroad as also the persons of Indian origin who have taken foreign citizenship, is nearly 14 million.

(b.) There is no provision for conducting any census for such expatriate citizens.

(c) No, Sir.

In addition to that I want to share some information at this stage itself with the hon. Members because I got this information late and I could not put it in the printed form, that of these 14 million the number of Indian citizens is 3 million.

SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Sir, I am grateful for the additional information which the Minister has provided but I am still partly amused and partly intrigued. If there is no regular census, how can he be so sure that the total number of Indian citizens is 3 million? Twill let that pass. I assume that is is a guess work.

The reason why I am raising this issue is that, of these 3 million—I am taking the Minister's figure—the overwhelming

majority is of migrant workers, skilled, unskilled, semi-skilled workers, ordinary citizens of our country who are working hard in foreign lands and are remitting crores of rupees every year. They are really the unsung heroes of our battle to salvage our balance of payments. If I can quote some recent figures, even with all our lobbying over the past four years, the total quantum of direct foreign investment that has come into the country is hardly Rs. 4,800 crores, but these citizens of ours, living abroad, are sending each year Rs. 4,000 crores or Rs. 5,000 crores so that their importance is very much larger than life. It should be so at least.

Now, all I am suggesting is that, if we could take a little bit of more interest in them and offer them some additional incentives such as the right to vote in our elections, their commitment towards India would increase, and it might be that this sum of Rs. 5,000 crores would jump up to Rs. 10,000 crores, Rs. 15,000 crores or Rs. 20,000 crores so that we could dispense with the indignities that were involved in such a deal as was sealed with Enron which has now been unsealed.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: As regards the figures, it is true that we cannot conduct the census. Therefore, accuracy of the figure is always questionable. I would like to share this information with the hon. Members that the information we collect is given in the Annual Report of the Ministry, which is being circulated along with the Demands for Grants. We get this information from three sources. We request those who got to register themselves on their arrival or on their departure in our Missions. That is one source. We get this information from our ethnic organisations located in those areas. That is the second source. We also get information from the respective countries' local Governments. This is our third source. All this information we get. I agree with the hon. Member that it cannot be accurate.

The second point which the hon. Member has referred to is about the contribution of Non-Resident Indians and Indian citizens who are working there in different countries. They are remitting a substantial quantum of foreign exchange to help our balance of payments. There is no denying the fact that !1к4 have made a substantial contribution. They are not doing this merely from today. Immediately since the first onslaught in 1973, when incidentally I happened to be the Revenue Minister at that point of time and when 1 introduced two accounts—FCNR and other—the Non-Resident Indians are helping us ;i*f,tantially in remitting their hard-earned money in the form of foreign exchange, which has helped us considerably. From time to time a demand has been raised by them and various ethnic organisations representing them for giving them some incentives and helping them. It was also asked whether they can be extended dual citizenship. The question of voting rights would come if we can extend them the dual citizenship. As per the Indian law today, even an Indian citizen is to cast his vote in the constituency or in the area where he is a normal resident. In fact, this issue has to be debated and discussed. Of course, it has to be done through some sort of a consensus and it cannot be responded to immediately in the Question Hour, but I do feel that they have raised this issue and they have voiced their concern. Even we are contemplating of identifying them iii some for by giving some sort of Euro-Card as has been suggested by some Non-Resident organisations.

SHRI ASHOK MITRA: I am not interested in those who have taken foreign citizenship Forget about them.

They are not our nationals. But those of our nationals, who still swear by the Indian nationality and who still want to come back home or who are occasionlly working overseas, for them if we can make arrangement for suffrage, then I think that would be a major advance.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I appreciate this, but this issue was also taken up with the Election Commission. The Election Commission has sent a letter dated 27th September, 1993 in which they said that within the existing arrangement it is not possible. Therefore, even for the Indian citizens it is not possible because the principle....

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: Sir, is he contemplating to change the law or not?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I am coming to that aspect, but this is an area where we have to build up a consensus and for that it requires larger consultation with political parties. Surely we would like to have that because we cannot simply bring in a law and get it passed unless there is a consensus.

SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Sir, in my second supplementary I seek your indulgence. This is a very specific information about one group of Indian migrants which we are seeking. This matter was already raised in the House. There was a news item that 75,000 of our women were being sent out to Singapore to work as maids. There are two issues involved. One, there is a vacuum in the availability of maids in Singapore, because of a rumpus between Singapore and the Philippines over the hanging of a Filipino woman who was working there as maid. So, all Fillipino maids have been withdrawn and there is an impression created that Indian women are being sent as strike-breakers which I think is a very unwholesome impression to be created about our women.

The second thing which is really worrying me much more is this, we do not want these women to be lost in the flesh market of South East Asia. I wish the External Affairs Minister in association with the Labour Minister who is also responsible for this particular thing, would ferret out information and take care that these women are generally taken care of.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this matter pertains to the Ministry of Labour because they have an organisation to look into this matter. Surely, I will take it up with them and find out the latest position and pass on the iformation to the hon. Member.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: A large number of Indian women are taken to the Middle East countries also. I would like to know about their condition and their number.

मौलाना ओबैदुल्ला खान आज़ी : थैंक्यू सरकार। सर, हुकूमत ने अपने जवाब में यह कहा है कि ऐसे लोगो की मर्दुम-शुमारी की कोई तजबीज नहीं हैं और न ही उन को वोट दिलवाने की सहूलियत मुहैया करवाने की कोई तजवीज हुकूमत के जैरे-गौर हैं। सर यह तो बड़ा ही संगीन मामला हैं। जब तक सारे हिंदुस्तानी चाहे वह अंदरूनी मुल्क हो या बैरून मुल्क हों, वह सारे लोग हुकूमत की तसकील में शामिल नहीं होते और हूकूमत बनवाने में, उन का वोटण शामिल नहीं होता, तब तक हमारे मुल्क में जम्हूरियत की कैसे पुख्ता और मुकम्मल माना जा रहा हैं, यह बात मेरी समझ में नहीं आती। दूसरी बात यह हैं कि इस तरह से मैं जम्हूरियत को ना-मुकम्मल ही समझता हूं और जरूरत है कि उन को हिंदुस्तानी शहरी जो बैरूनी मुल्कों में रह रहे हैं, उन को भी वोट देने का इंतजाम किया जाए और हुकूमत को इस पर संजीदगी से गौर करना चाहिए। इसलिए मैं यह जानना चाहूंगा कि क्या हुकुमत इस सिलसिले में कोई तजवीज लाएगी? इसलिए कि बाहर जो लोग रहते हैं। वह हमारे देश को बहुत अच्छा फासरेन एक्सचेंज देते हैं और अपने देश की वफ़ादारियो के साथ, दूसरे मुल्को में उसी तरह से जुड़े रहते हैं जिस तरह से देश के अंदर रहकर लोग अपने देश के हितों की हिफाजत करते हैं। ऐसी सूरत में वोट उन का सब से बड़ा बेनिफ़िट हैं, सब से

बड़ा अख्तियार हैं और इस अख्तियार से उन का महरूम रहना हमारे लिए बाइसे शर्म हैं। मैं हुकूमत से गुजारिश करूंगा कि उस का इंतजाम के सिलसिले में हमारी हुकूमत क्या तज़वीज लाने जा रही हैं।

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SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have already responded to the suggestions of the hon. Member. I had also mentioned that this piece of legislation would require the support of all sections of the House. That is why a wider consultation at the higher political level is needed.

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SHIR G.G. SWELL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Minister is aware that Indian citizens going abroad have got to go with their passports and from that it can be known as to how many Indians are out of the country. But here the question is not about the peripatetic Indians who travel from one country to another but it is about certain Indians who are settled in a particular country. If I heard the Minister right, he has mentioned the number as 3 million. Am I correct?

SHIR PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Yes.

SHRI G.G. SWELL: How did you arrive at that number? Have you conducted any kind of census? If there is no kind of census, how did you arrive at that number? have you followed any particular process and are you going to continue with that process? We also share the sentiments of many Members in this

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†[ ]Transliteration in Arabic Script.

House that Indians—they may be anywhere—are Indians and they have a right to participate in the parliamentary democracy in this country. Of course, this is a much bigger question. But, I think, it would help, if this is done.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, lastly about the question of Indian maids going to work in Singapore. There is quite a big rumpus about it in the north-East over this question . Can you enlighten me where it is, whether Indian maids have really gone to Singapore to stay and work? I know that Singapore is a civilised place. It is not that they are going to be lost in a flesh trade. They are going to begin an honest living there.

What exactly is the decision about this proposal?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: In regard to the methodology of getting the figures, as I responded to the earlier question, we do not conduct any census. Mainly, we collect this information from three sources; voluntary compliance of regulation in the various missions, figures given by ethnic organisations of different countries and figures supplied by the local Governments. All are taken together and computed. That is why I am using the word 'approximate'. These are not accurate figures.

In regard to the number of persons who leave here for abroad, quite a few of those who go with Indian passports come back. The number of passports issued in the year 1994, from January to December, 12 months, was roughly about 20 lakhs, two millions. This is the normal figure. Sometimes, it may be a little more or a little less. That contains the usual travellers including tourists.

In regard to the voting rights, I have already responded to that question. As the hon. Member also appreciates, it requires a larger consultations. But the comments made by various hon. Members clearly indicate that there is a strong feeling. in favour of extending these facilities to the Indian citizens living abroad. That would help us in reaching a consensus.

In regard to the maids, as I mentioned, I will check up with my hon. coleague. Either he or I will pass on that information to the hon. Members.

SHRI S.S. SURJEWALA: Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government of India have the information and report on the NRIs and other Indians settled abroad being harassed, humiliated and persecuted. There are so many instances where Indians abroad are not only humiliated but also beaten up, insulted and killed. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what steps the Government of India have already taken or propose to take to stop this kind of harassment and persecution. Dual citizenship is the only answer to harassment and persecution. The hon. Prime Minister and the hon. External Affairs Minister have also, time and again, promised the Indians abroad, while on tour, that the dual citizenship issue will be considered. Will the Government of India take any concrete steps in this bahalf?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, in regard to the harassment, intimidation and persecution, whenever such cases are brought to our notice and we receive complaints in our mission, they take up the cases with the local Governments and the appropriate steps are being taken. In fact, a couple of questions relating to this question are answered on the floor of Parliament from time to time.

In regard to dual citizenship, it is a question having larger implications. In fact, even during my last visit to the USA, these questions were raised by a number of Indian organisations. It has been indicated that in law it is not permissible. It is not permissible in our Constitution. In our system, unless we amend the Constitution, it is not

permissible. And for that, we require a consensus. Everybody will have to take a view on it. Dual citizenship is a larger question. Within that larger question, we have the limited question of whether the right to franchise could be extended to the citizens settled abroad. Various Members have expressed opinion in favour of that. So, this will have to be considered in greater detail and a decision is to be taken.

विपक्ष के नेता (**श्री सिकन्दर बख्त**) : सरकार, मैंए उम्मीद करता हूं कि मैंने मिनिस्टर के इब्तदाई जवाब को ठीक से सुना। मुझे यह सुनकरन तासज्जुब हुआ कि जो हिन्दुस्तानी हिन्दुस्तान के बाहर रहते हैं, उनको किसी किस्म के वोट देने की सहूलियत नहीं हैं। उन हिन्दुस्तानियों में बहुत बड़ी तादाद ऐसे हिन्दुस्तानियों की हैं, जो हिन्दुस्तानी पासपोर्ट पर ही रह जाते हैं। क्या उन हिन्दुस्तानियों को पोस्टल बैलेट के जरिए अपना वोट, अपनी राय जाहिर करने का हक देना डिनाई कर दिया गया हैं, तो क्यों किया गया?

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†[ ]Transliteration in Arabic Script.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, I quoted the Election Commision's letter dated 27th September, 1993, addressed to our Ministry. The exact language of the letter is: "Indians living abroad, except service personnel, are not eligible to vote in the elections in the Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assemblies in India." That is why a suggestion has come whether the franchise right could be given to the Indian citizens, even without extending the dual citizenship, within the framework of the constitution. For that, the necessary amendment of the electoral law will have to be made and for that, you require a larger consensus. I have already referred to that.

Training Centres of Hizbul Mujahideen in Himachal Pradesh

*144. SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a number of training centres have been established near Poanta Sahib and Chamba in Himachal Pradesh by the Kashmiri terrorist outfit Hizbul Mujahideen;

(b) whether it is a fact that this terrorist outfit has warned the State Government that Kashmir-like situation may develop there also if its activities are checked; and

(c) if so, the action Government have taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): (a) Government of Himachal Pradesh have intimated that no such training Centres of Kashmiri terrorists outfit called Hizbul Mujahideen has been found in Poanta Sahib or Chamba or in any part of the State.

(b) As per Government of Himachal Pradesh, no such threat or warning has been received bv the State Government.